DECR chairman congratulates Primate of Albanian Orthodox Church on his 90th birthday

The head of the Department for External Church Relations (DECR) of the Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, sent His Beatitude Anastasios, Archbishop of Tirana and All Albania, the following congratulatory message on his 90th birthday.

Your Beatitude,

I wholeheartedly congratulate Your Beatitude on the significant date – your 90th birthday.

The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand (Ps. 37:23-24). These God-inspired lines of the holy Psalmist come to one's heart in considering your long life journey filled with *the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God* (Phil. 1:11).

Many years have elapsed since, having left the house of your devout Orthodox parents, you went to Athens in order to draw from there the knowledge for your future missionary service to place it at *the feet of Christ* (St. Gregory the Theologian, To Nemessiah). Seeing your zeal and foreseeing your future apostolic work, the Lord has generously endowed you with all that is necessary for preaching *the Gospel of the Kingdom of God* (Mk. 1:14). Today your name is closely associated with the activation of the youth service in the Orthodox Church and organization of mission in Africa. The true height of your church service has been reached in the revival of the Albanian Orthodox Church.

At a time so hard for the world Orthodoxy, your contribution to the strengthening of the unity of holy fraternal Churches is invaluable.

I prayerfully wish Your Holiness the spiritual and physical fortitude and God's abundant help in your lofty and important ministry for the good of the Albanian Orthodox Church.

With respectful love in Christ,

+ Hilarion

Metropolitan of Volokolamsk

Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations

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